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Message Media, Dept. RTN
P. O. Box 9007
Berkeley, Calif. 94709 U.S.A.

Thank you.

To:

FIRST CLASS MAIL

BERKELEY JAN 18 2 PM 1971 CALIF.

ALWAYS ZIP C

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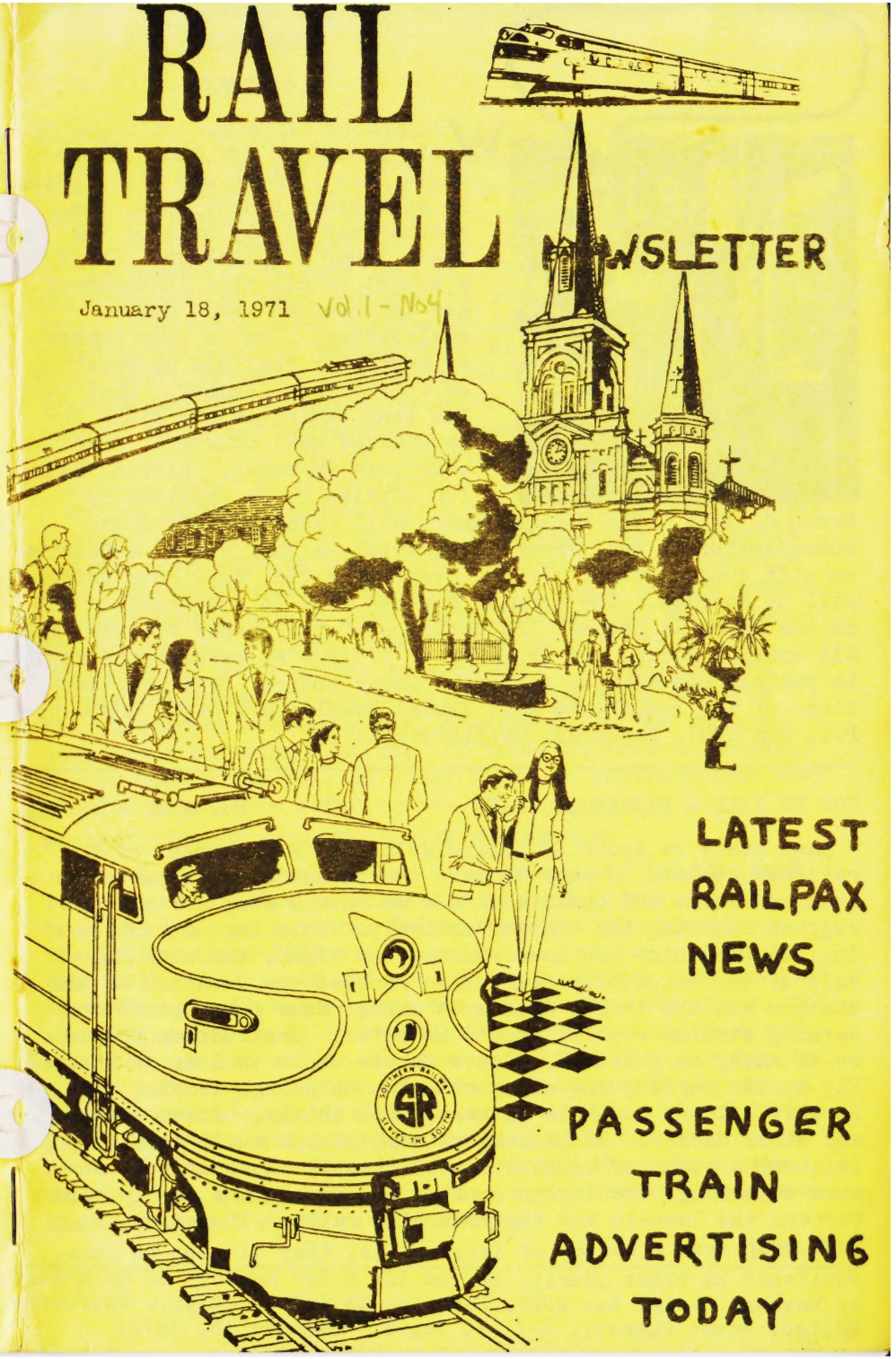
RAIL TRAVEL NEWSLETTER, Vol. 1, No. 4
Published by Message Media, P. O. Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709. U.S.A.

RAIL TRAVEL NEWSLETTER

January 18, 1971 Vol.1 - No4



LATEST RAILPAX NEWS

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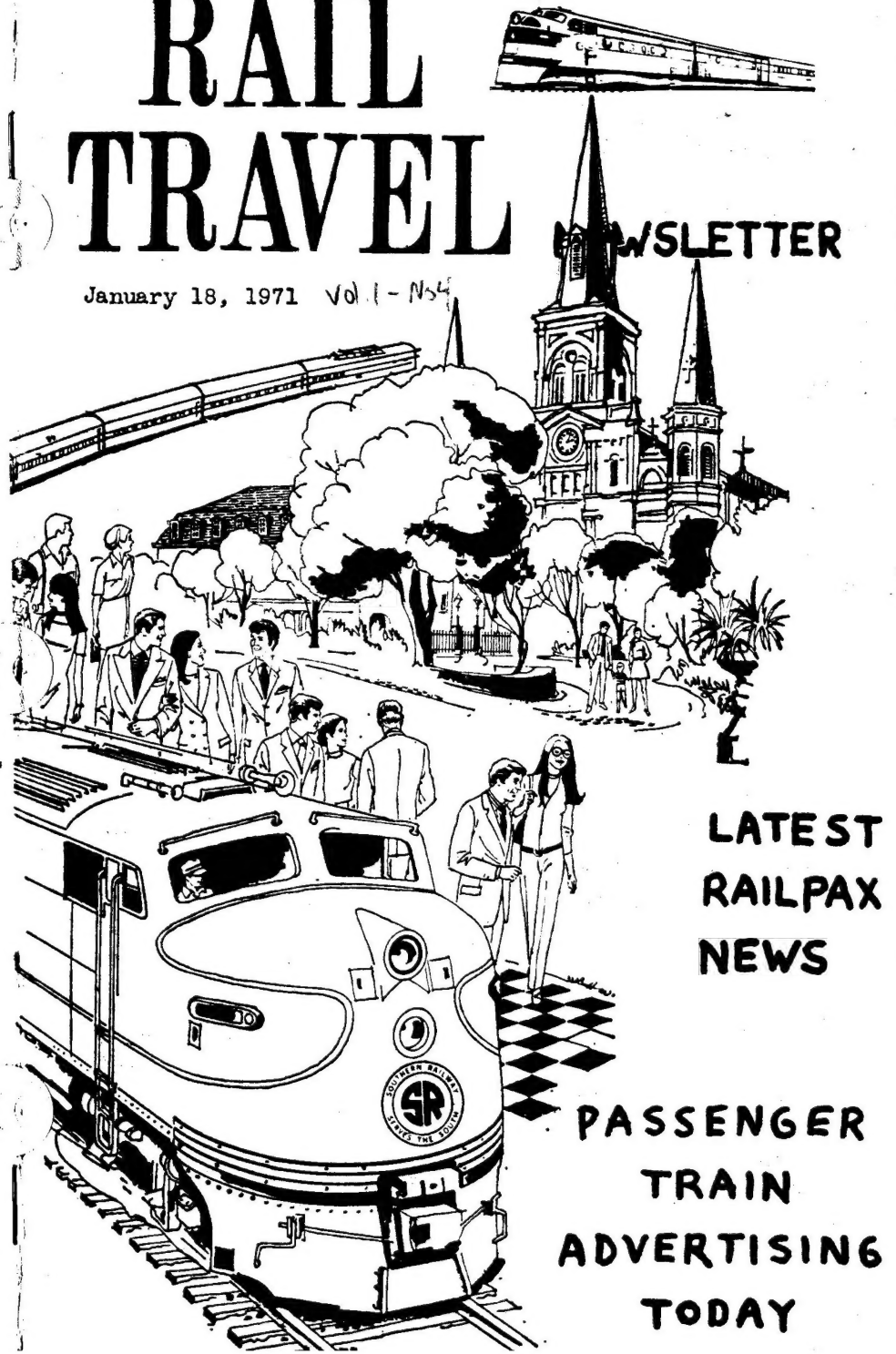

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Write a caption for the balloon above this picture and win a prize! As most train riders know, the automat car is the bane of the train lover's existence. It is a symbol of all that is indecent and dehumanized about modern railroading. Now is your chance to vent your feelings by creating an appropriate comment. What is the lady saying as she plays the mechanized meal monster? Send your idea in today. Closing date for entries to be received is March 6, 1971. The winning entry will receive a six-month subscription to Rail Travel Newsletter--either a new, extension or gift subscription. In the event of a tie, duplicate prizes will be awarded. The winning caption will be published in RTN in the March 15 issue. The decision of the judges will be final. All entries become the property of RTN and we reserve the right to publish non-winning entries. Enter today! Send your caption--of any length--to Rail Travel Newsletter, Dept. Contest, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709.

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Published 24 times yearly, on the 1st & 3rd Mondays of each mont by Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. $4/yr., 25¢/issue Editor: James Russell. Vol. 1, No. 4. January 18, 1971.

EDITORIALS: REJOICE! WE KILLED 55,300 PEOPLE!

No, the figures aren't from Vietnam. They represent the people killed in traffic accidents in the U. S. in 1970. We haven't seen any figures on the number of injured, maimed, paralyzed for life. We don't have a count of the number of parents left childless, of the number of children left without parents, of brothers without sisters, of wives without husbands. But nevertheless we are asked to be thankful because for the first year since 1958 there was a reliably measurable decrease in the number of traffic deaths. We killed about 1100 more in 1969. Government "experts" believe this commendable figure is due in part to heavier use of interstate highways, reportedly "twice as safe" as other roads.

We are highly skeptical about these experts' conclusions. Should we predict that the more interstate highways built and the more heavily they are used, the fewer the fatalities? We don't want to put down any genuine effort towards greater safety, but we can't help feeling that the statisticians may be deluding both themselves and the public. Our personal observations suggest that the more drivers become accustomed to divided freeways the more careless they become on two-way roads, driving faster and forgetting about oncoming traffic. If true, interstate freeways may be upping the toll on other roads at the same time they provide supposedly safer routes.

SECRETARY VOLPE APPEARS GROSSLY MISINFORMED

When Louisiana Public Service Commissioner Knight asked Volpe why the L.A.-New Orleans Sunset route was omitted from the Railpax network, Volpe replied that poor riding statistics since 1967 were considered. Anyone who is even half tuned in to the transportation scene must realize that when a railroad removes the lounge car, the diner, the sleeping cars, drops interstate baggage handling, and substitutes coaches and an automat on a 2,033 mile run has to be not only expecting but stimulating decreased patronage. Naivete is the mildest term we can give this kind of thinking. It does not appear to bode well when the head of the Dept. of Transportation, who is planning the rail system we must live with, seems to accept such debatable evidence that the Sunset route is expendable.

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Milwaukee Road Next To Go Bankrupt?

A committee of Milwaukee Road stockholders is charging that the railroad may be near bankruptcy, citing a 1969 loss of $5.6 million and $12.9 million as of Sept. 1970. The group attempted to advertise their claims and contact other stockholders, but the railroad, under Wisconsin law, obtained a restraining order through a Federal district court Jan. 11 and withheld other stockholders' names. The committee, lead by a Chicago securities firm, reportedly is concerned that a fate similar to the Penn Central debacle may befall them.

Penn Central To Get Its Money--Maybe

The track had been cleared for PC to issue $100 million in government-guaranteed trustee certificates. Congress passed the necessary legislation this month, and the ICC and DOT approved. But after final approval, Richard J. Smith, trustee for the New Haven under bankruptcy proceedings, appealed the issue to a U.S. court, charging that the New Haven would be financially hurt by the move. The money is expected to keep PC in cash until the end of March and hopefully longer. But the government will watch PC's books closely while some stockholders continue to call for nationalizing the road to protect their interests. The certificates are scheduled to be issued the last week in January, but may be delayed by Smith's action.

A Bad Winter For The Railroads

It's been a severe winter in most parts of the U.S. so far. Heavy snows and subzero temperatures have hampered all modes of transportation. At the time of writing, the West Coast is threatened by floods from heavy warm rains on top of a large snowpack. A number of stories have already come out of the mess, chronicling stalled and delayed trains and disruptions even more serious in auto and air traffic. RTN will present a roundup of the winter transportation news in the next issue, dated February 1.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK ***

"We have unavoidably reached the conclusion that it omits certain links, segments and other specifications essential in our view to a meaningful national railroad passenger system. ...the preliminary designation leaves whole regions of the country without service, and this service, our findings indicate, is clearly needed."

--ICC letter to Sec. Volpe outlining proposed expansion of Railpax network

"Europe, which seems to improve trains as fast as the United States retires them, offers living proof that railroads can compete with, and often outstrip, airlines and cars. ... In the United States, ...trains can only get better."

--David Butwin, Travel Editor, in Saturday Review, Jan. 9

"Like a railroad engine driven into a roundhouse, the railroad strike issue keeps coming back out again. Unless someone miraculously comes up with a way to resolve a long-running dispute between the railroads and four labor unions another nationwide strike looms on March 1."

--Wall Street Journal editorial, Jan. 11

LETTERS

ON OUR PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL EXPRESS

Your article on a Canada-Mexico Express shows some new and fresh thinking without regard to existing service and systems. This is the kind of thinking that has been sadly lacking in the passenger train field for the past twenty years or more. Hopefully the "Railpax" organization will take cognizance of such thinking and initiate new and needed services that were not provided in the past due to the negative attitude of far too many railroad managements.

Charles F. Vercelli
Transportation Consultant
San Francisco, Calif.

Unlike many railfans who spend fortunes on models or riding on fan trips, I subscribe to the theory that the only way to keep trains rolling for everybody is to use the trains now running for our travel -- and get others to do the same ("putting our money where our mouths are," so to speak).

Paul Halbach
Los Angeles, Calif.

Passenger Train Advertising Today

NOTHING sells without advertising. This basic fact is known not only by businessmen but by every school child in our mass media culture. Practically every individual in the nation is stimulated by some form of advertising every day of his life. Even basic attitudes and values are formed and modified by the ads all around us. Our travel habits are built up by the constant barrage of inputs urging us to "fly the friendly skies" or "grab ahold of the wheel." No approach, rational, emotional, or subliminal, is neglected in the unending effort to shape our habits of getting around in our environment.

Where is the train in this plethora of persuasion? The answer is that the railroads have generally given up the fight to promote patrons via the mass media. While some carriers still actively advertise, others do not, and the whole chain of rail travel around the nation is weakened by the critical links where passenger service is discouraged. Even those roads who do buy advertising are forced by economics to bypass the highly persuasive media of television and slick-paper magazines. Let's look at some of the best efforts presently going into passenger train advertising--largely black-and-white newspaper ads.

Southern Railway, headquartered in Washington D.C., is one of the progressives in promoting rail travel. Their idea of initiating the "transcontinental rail cruise" must be considered one of the outstanding promotional ideas of 1970. Their tri-weekly New York-Los Angeles through sleeper, with "overnight stop in exotic New Orleans" (see front cover for a portion of SR ad), was introduced with an attractive bit of artwork. Three elements--train, people, and scenery suggestive of New Orleans -- were subtly combined in an eye-catching and pleasing manner. The scale of the train makes it at once a friendly, powerful and secure conveyance. People and train mingle together in an informal atmosphere impossible to achieve in an airlines ad. The scenery and the destination are right there, as they are nearly so in reality, again an achievement the airlines must forego. The ad merits careful study as an example of qualities of rail travel that could be capitalized upon in future train advertising. If advertising were the only factor necessary for success of this train, SR would probably have it made. (contd. p. 8)

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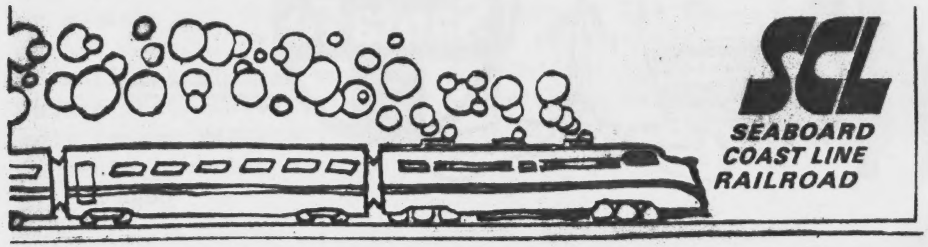
Santa Fe recently published a nice ad in announcing its new "Flexi-fare" plan (see p. 7). There's little novel in the ad makeup--it combines long-familiar Santa Fe advertising elements: Chico the Indian boy, a Santa Fe streamliner in typical Southwestern scenery, the well-known Santa Fe emblem. Still, it somehow comes across as fresh and modern. Chico does have an engaging smile, and the whole suggests a stable yet progressive and friendly company. Besides, the ad goes into detail about fares, charge privileges and other travel factors so that the reader is informed about what to expect if he telephones one of the numbers listed. The company sounds genuinely helpful and inviting.

An approach rather different from these two is that of Seaboard Coast Line (see portion of ad below). SCL is one of the most consistent advertisers in newspaper travel sections. Unlike some ads, SCL's are eye-catching and well-placed. They make good use of white space to surround a catchy phrase such as "The champagne train rides again" or "Put on your pajamas and go to Florida." A cartoon-type train is generally shown, and the various features of the East Coast runs are mentioned, such as the movies, bingo games, fashion shows, and candlelight dinners with free champagne. SCL is adept at such innovation, and much variety is shown in their ads. The company would have to be rated as one of the most creative in utilizing printed media to promote train travel.

How does passenger train advertising stack up against promotion of air and highway travel? Poorly, if one considers the virtual non-usage of TV and photogravure magazine media. While not downgrading black-and-white print, one must admit that the other media have an impact and a huge audience that make them unique. Railroads have fallen into a vicious circle--these media are costly but high-yielding; passenger department budgets can't handle them, so patronage declines even further. What's more, the wealthy airlines and auto companies make heavy use of them, quickly robbing the rails of potential users. The real possibilities of promoting trains via these media have never been explored. Trains have unique features other vehicles lack that fit TV to a tee. In future articles we'll say more about this, and also discuss what foreign railroads are doing to promote travel on their lines. ***



Texas Attempts to Capitalize on Commute Woes

Appealing to frustrated East Coast commuters, the Texas Industrial Commission, Austin, is advertising in Eastern newspapers to draw industry to its state. One ad pictures a tired-looking businessman riding a commuter train, with the message that he's wasting time. The ad mentions not only transportation problems but also tax, labor, weather and communications difficulties. Says the ad, "There are no commuter trains in Texas, or most of those other problems either. Texas does have the right conditions for your company's success."

Southern Pacific President Attacks Regulation

Interviewed in the N.Y. Times Jan. 10, SP President Benjamin F. Biaggini discussed how the rails are faring in financially difficult times: "1970 has brought a very full realization of how tightly the noose of 19th-century regulation and steam-era work rules fits around our neck. Those restrictions hamper railroads in the best of times; they can prove fatal to marginal operations in a difficult economy."

Union Urges Nationalization of Railroads

Nationalization wouldn't hurt union members, and might help them, according to Charles Luna, president of the large United Transportation Union. Unless the union's dispute is settled by March 1, the time when Congress' stop-gap legislation prohibiting a strike expires, Luna will press for nationalization. He said his union had bargained more successfully with Canadian National than with Canadian Pacific.

Germany Prepares Rails for 1972 Olympics

Before the Olympics begin at Munich, W.Germany will have running between that city and Bremen the first 3 of dozens of 125 mph electric trains to connect 72 major cities and resorts in an 1800-mile network.

By next issue the final Railpax network is expected to be announced. Feb. 15: 1970 rail events chronology!

Passengers Lose Another Service

Starting this month the Railroad Transfer Service Inc. no longer moves passengers and baggage between Chicago rail terminals. Decreased passengers and higher operating costs led to this decision. (Thanks to C. F. Vercelli of San Francisco for this item)

Important Reading for Railfans

A series of articles on rail travel bound to be influential began in Saturday Review with the Jan. 9 issue. In the first, David Butwin, travel editor, reported on European trains. Jan. 16 he described a coast-to-coast U.S. trip via the North Coast Limited and Broadway Limited. As might be expected, the report (surrounded, incidentally, by airline ads) is not too flattering to the railroads.

Must reading is an informative report on commute trains in Newsweek, Jan. 18. East Coast commute conditions are pictured as bleak indeed, but the bright predictions for the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit system seem overly optimistic to one closer to the scene.

Supreme Court Finally Kills California Zephyr

When the ICC ordered the CZ discontinued in March 1970 the city of Chicago and some other citizen groups appealed the case to a Federal district court. That court ruled that the ICC must hold further hearings on the train. However, the Western Pacific and Burlington Northern went to the Supreme Court, which has just reversed the district court's ruling, thus leaving the ICC discontinuance standing.

Danville Flyer Will Fly a Bit Longer

Louisville & Nashville has been trying to drop its Chicago-Danville trains 3 & 4. The Supreme Court this month ruled that the ICC must study the trains' status under the forthcoming Railpax plan, thus allowing them to continue running at least temporarily. The 123-mile daily run carries coaches and a buffet lounge car, but will not accept checked baggage.

No "Instant Miracles" for Penn Central Commuters

This month marks the start of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's takeover of the New Haven, Harlem and Hudson divisions of PC commuter service, and while MTA has carte blanche to pick up any deficit in running the trains, MTA's chairman, William J. Ronan, is too realistic to expect immediate improvement. A $2 million deficit on the New Haven alone is forecast for 1971. 144 new cars are on order, but won't arrive for 2 years. More maintenance men will be hired, now badly needed. Other changes include new shop facilities, high-level platforms and refurbishing of catenary. Ronan is quoted in the N. Y. Daily News as saying "the trouble has been that traditional railroaders get involved in pulling cars back and forth--I call it 'playing trains'--but they're not really attuned to the fact that they're dealing with people, with individuals. And that's what we're trying to bring--the attempt to give people a decent environment to travel in."

(Thanks to Peter Goetz of Rome, N. Y. for the above information.)

"You Were Actually on the 5:09?"

Collectors of unbelievable commute tales should read the Wall Street Journal of last Dec. 21, in which Paul Lancaster humorously describes his experience on the New Haven line on the train that stalled in a tunnel on Thanksgiving Eve. Mr. Lancaster is feature editor of the paper, and he says he spends up to 20 hours a week observing the New Haven at close hand.

Is the Del Monte a Commute Train?

The SP Del Monte runs daily between San Francisco and Monterey, a distance of about 120 miles. It carries one coach and a reserved-seat parlor car that distance. Several years ago, unable to drop the service, SP decided to work the train into its Peninsula commute runs. Now the train carries additionally a variable number of commute cars between San Francisco and San Jose. On weekends it carries just one commute car, but keeps it on the entire 120 miles. Question: when Railpax starts, will the train be considered a commuter, as SP has for several years, or will it be dropped as a passenger train not included in the Railpax network?

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Louisville & Nashville has been trying to drop its Chicago-Danville trains 3 & 4. The Supreme Court this month ruled that the ICC must study the trains' status under the forthcoming Railpax plan, thus allowing them to continue running at least temporarily. The 123-mile daily run carries coaches and a buffet lounge car, but will not accept checked baggage.

No "Instant Miracles" for Penn Central Commuters

This month marks the start of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's takeover of the New Haven, Harlem and Hudson divisions of PC commuter service, and while MTA has carte blanche to pick up any deficit in running the trains, MTA's chairman, William J. Ronan, is too realistic to expect immediate improvement. A $2 million deficit on the New Haven alone is forecast for 1971. 144 new cars are on order, but won't arrive for 2 years. More maintenance men will be hired, now badly needed. Other changes include new shop facilities, high-level platforms and refurbishing of catenary. Ronan is quoted in the N. Y. Daily News as saying "the trouble has been that traditional railroaders get involved in pulling cars back and forth--I call it 'playing trains'--but they're not really attuned to the fact that they're dealing with people, with individuals. And that's what we're trying to bring--the attempt to give people a decent environment to travel in."

(Thanks to Peter Goetz of Rome, N. Y. for the above information.)

"You Were Actually on the 5:09?"

Collectors of unbelievable commute tales should read the Wall Street Journal of last Dec. 21, in which Paul Lancaster humorously describes his experience on the New Haven line on the train that stalled in a tunnel on Thanksgiving Eve. Mr. Lancaster is feature editor of the paper, and he says he spends up to 20 hours a week observing the New Haven at close hand.

Is the Del Monte a Commute Train?

The SP Del Monte runs daily between San Francisco and Monterey, a distance of about 120 miles. It carries one coach and a reserved-seat parlor car that distance. Several years ago, unable to drop the service, SP decided to work the train into its Peninsula commute runs. Now the train carries additionally a variable number of commute cars between San Francisco and San Jose. On weekends it carries just one commute car, but keeps it on the entire 120 miles. Question: when Railpax starts, will the train be considered a commuter, as SP has for several years, or will it be dropped as a passenger train not included in the Railpax network?